

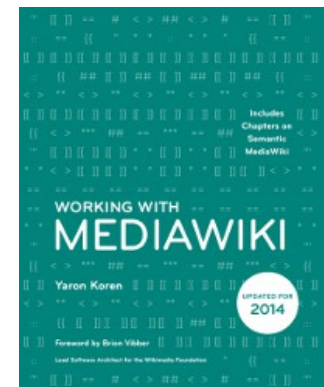
# What Semantic Forms won't do

Yaron Koren  
SMWCon Spring 2014  
May 22, 2014  
Montreal

# Yaron Koren

MediaWiki and Semantic MediaWiki developer,  
entrepreneur, consultant, hoster, author and  
evangelist.

Based in New York City.



# Semantic Forms

- My first MediaWiki extension
- The first Semantic MediaWiki extension
- Also the most popular SMW extension – in use on around 80% of sites that have SMW installed.

# What does Semantic Forms do?

A framework for creating and editing wiki pages that hold structured data via “semantic” templates.

Forms are defined via wiki pages, using a custom scripting language.

# But wait, there's more!

Also lets you:

- Create properties/templates/forms/categories via helper forms
- Create red-linked pages automatically
- Create forms for querying the data
- Edit page *sections*

# SF does a lot

And its list of features is still growing.

Current SF roadmap:

[https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Extension:Semantic\\_Forms/Known\\_bugs\\_and\\_planned\\_features](https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Extension:Semantic_Forms/Known_bugs_and_planned_features)

# But it won't do everything!

Some often-requested  
features probably won't  
get done.



# Won't do #1

Using forms for emailing.

- **Reason:** Emails aren't wiki pages – converting page output to plain text can be tricky.
- **Alternative:** “FormMailer” extension and others



# Won't do #2

Mix-and-match templates.

- **Example:**

```
{{Conference day|...}}  
{{Keynote|...}} {{Talk|...}}  
{{Talk|...}} {{Lunch break|...}}  
{{Talk|...}}
```

- **Reason:** Too hard to implement
- **Alternative:** Rethink/simplify your data structure

# Won't do #3

Improving “partial forms”.

...actually, I'm planning to get rid of these!

Partial forms: forms that only edit one template on the page.

Especially useful when page structure is unusual.

- **Example:**

```
{{Actor}} ...biography free text... {{Film role}}  
{{Film role}} {{Film role}} ...other free text...
```

“I just want to edit the film roles!”

## Won't do #3 (continued)

**Alternative to partial forms:** “Pseudo-partial forms”.

i.e., forms that contain the entire page structure, but only show inputs for the fields that the form should edit.

## Won't do #3 (continued)

Advantage of “pseudo-partial forms”:  
works well even if there are zero instances  
of a multiple-instance template.

- Also better from a developer perspective:  
no special handling required.

## Won't do #4

Modifying page titles, based on a page name formula.

- **Example:** a page is automatically named “Pizza Palace in Chicago”, and then the restaurant name changes...
- **Reason:** Solution would be complex... though code patches are welcome!
- **Alternative:** Replace Text extension

## Won't do #5

“Dynamic forms” - forms based on semantic data.

- **Example:** admins create questions and possible answers via SF forms – then users fill out SF forms that use those Q&As.
- **Reason:** Way too complex.
- **Alternative:** Hardcode all forms. :(

On a more positive note...

Improvements to Semantic Forms  
autocomplete coming, via 2014 Google  
Summer of Code project

# History of JS in Semantic Forms

- 2007: Scriptaculous
- 2008: YUI & Floatbox
- 2010: jQuery, jQuery UI & FancyBox
- 2013: + Dynatree
- 2014: + Select2  
(<http://ivaynberg.github.io/select2/>)



Questions/Comments/Complaints